



Statement to Clarify the Purpose of the Safe Drinking Water Act Petition to the EPA Regarding Kewaunee County Groundwater Contamination

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Groundwater contamination in Kewaunee County is widespread, with over 30% of tested wells being positive for harmful bacteria and unsafe levels of nitrates. Both of these contaminants can cause serious health problems if they make their way into drinking water. In addition to the risk of harm to peoples' health, families with contaminated wells must buy bottled water for everyday activities like brushing one's teeth, making dinner, and washing dishes. For these reasons, citizens, along with several environmental organizations, petitioned the EPA to study and appropriately address the groundwater pollution crisis in Kewaunee County. The precise cause of the contamination is not known, but the pollutants are typically associated with landspreading of manure. The citizens and groups that filed the petition are concerned and have asked EPA to use its authority to intervene to identify the source of and remedy drinking water pollution.

This request to EPA does not blame any specific facilities or sources for the groundwater contamination. The petition provides that pollutants in Kewaunee County's groundwater can come from agriculture, in particular from landspreading of manure by concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The petition does not accuse CAFOs of single-handedly creating this problem but does identify this industry as one potential source, and also acknowledges the region's Karst geology and its role in increased susceptibility for contamination of groundwater. The fact is that more study is needed to understand the causes of groundwater contamination in Kewaunee County. In response to this need, citizens are asking the EPA to study and address the problem.

Unless and until the source of the contamination is identified, it is impossible to improve the water quality problems and resultant threats to public health that Kewaunee County residents face every day. This petition was filed in direct response to the seriousness of the public health risk and the lack of state and local authority to intervene. This petition does not target any industry or any potential source, only brings attention to this problem and requests much-needed solutions.

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